DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 452 448 CG 030 865

AUTHOR Hoffman, Rose Marie
TITLE Theory to Practice: A Model for School Counselor Education.
PUB DATE 2001-00-00
NOTE 20p.; Based on paper presented at the Triennial Conference of the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (New Orleans, LA, October 27-31, 1999).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Counselor Training; *Curriculum Development; Higher Education; Introductory Courses; Models; *School Counselors; *Theory Practice Relationship

ABSTRACT

School counselor education programs are being redesigned to equip school counselors-in-training with information and skills to address the needs of a rapidly changing society. This paper presents one school counselor education program's process of dealing with pedagogical and programmatic concerns. A model was designed that emphasized the integration of theory and practice so that school counselors-in-training could understand and articulate a sound rationale for the approaches they utilize. Exit and entrance courses specific to the needs of the school counselor-in-training were used to provide a mechanism for delivery of this curriculum content. (Contains 12 references.) (JDM)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 452 448

Running head: A MODEL FOR SCHOOL COUNSELOR EDUCATION

Theory to Practice: A Model for School Counselor Education

Rose Marie Hoffman

California State University, Long Beach

Note: This article is based on a presentation given by the author at the triannual national conference of the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision held in October 1999 in New Orleans, LA.

Please direct all communication concerning this manuscript to:
Rose Marie Hoffman, Ph.D.
California State University, Long Beach
Department of Educational Psychology, Administration, and Counseling
ED2 - 187; 1250 Bellflower Blvd.; Long Beach, CA 90840-2201
562/985-5626 (voicemail) 562/985-4534 (fax)
562/431-3837 (home ph.)
rhoffman@csulb.edu

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
RM Hoffman
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CG030865

Abstract

School counselor education programs are being redesigned to equip school counselors-in-training with information and skills to address the needs of a rapidly changing society and to promote the success of all students. A model is presented that emphasizes the application of theory to practice in the school setting and includes entrance and exit courses specific to the needs of school counseling students.

Theory to Practice: A Model for School Counselor Education

School counselor education reform is a national movement. Training programs need to reassess whether they are adequately preparing school counselors to work effectively as leaders, consultants, collaborators, coordinators, communicators, and advocates both for their students and themselves, as members of an evolving profession. A few of the many factors that need to be considered are: the development of the National Standards for School Counseling Programs by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) (Campbell & Dahir, 1997), the nationwide emphasis on academic success for all students (Education Trust, 1996), the pervasiveness of violence on school campuses (Sandhu, 2000), the expanding scope and intensity of students' personal/social needs and the accompanying need for a systems approach (Keys & Lockhart, 1999), and issues of diversity (e.g., ethnicity/race, gender, class, sexual orientation, disabilities, etc.). Although all of the above factors can be conceptualized as national issues, some, particularly issues of diversity, are given varying degrees of attention depending on state, regional, and/or local determinants and priorities.

Both pedagogical and programmatic concerns must be addressed by school counselor educators. The purpose of this article is to discuss one school counselor education program's process of dealing with these critical issues and developing a curriculum that is current and relevant to the needs of school counselors in the 21st century. The program model presented is designed to prepare school counselors to deal with the challenges of contemporary educational systems and the needs of our youth. The model emphasizes the integration of theory and practice so that school counselors-in-training can understand and articulate a sound rationale for the approaches that they utilize.

First, national, state, and local considerations related to school counselor education reform are identified. These considerations are followed by a discussion of what our school counselors-in-training want to know, as well as what they need to know, and how the discrepancy between these two areas might be addressed. Highlights of our school counselor education "program-in-process" at California State University, Long Beach are then described, including the focus on application of theory to practice and the use of entrance and exit courses to facilitate that as well as other emphases. Finally, suggestions are offered to assist other school counselor educators interested in modifying or adapting this model to their individual settings. As the focus of the article shifts from collective concerns to those related specifically to the school counselor education program at California State University, Long Beach, the tone will shift accordingly from a formal to a more "personal" account.

Influences on School Counselor Education Reform

Like educational reform on a broader level, school counselor education reform is impacted by a number of influences which may or may not reflect common beliefs, values, and priorities. These influences include initiatives or elements that differ in scope in that they may represent interests or phenomena apparent at the national, state, or local levels. Both within and between these three levels, such influences may manifest themselves as competing or complementary forces for school counselor education programs to consider.

National Level

ASCA's National Standards for School Counseling Programs. Since their development in 1997, ASCA's National Standards for School Counseling Programs have been recognized by the profession as a framework for the creation of preK-12 comprehensive, developmental

counseling and guidance programs. The standards (Campbell & Dahir, 1997) are organized according to three areas of focus: the academic development domain, the career development domain, and the personal/social development domain, and identify the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students are expected to acquire in relation to each of these three areas.

Nationwide emphasis on academic success. Standards-based instruction and concentration on test scores have combined to form the basis for accountability in modern education. Despite ASCA's position that the academic, career, and personal/social domains merit equal attention by school counselors, national funding opportunities for school counselor reform (i.e., Dewitt Wallace / Reader's Digest) appear solely focused on student achievement. Although Dewitt Wallace / Reader' Digest funding (directed by Education Trust, 1996) provides necessary support for closing the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students, its lack of attention to students' personal, social, and emotional health is a concern for programs seeking a more balanced approach.

School violence. Violence on school campuses and among school-aged youth is not a new phenomenon; however, its movement from inner-city to more affluent neighborhoods and communities has garnered the attention of increasing numbers of people. The 1999 Columbine massacre as well as other recent murders by students of both peers and teachers, coupled with the media attention precipitated by these events, has made this issue a major concern of many individuals and organizations. School counselor education programs must explore ways in which they can prepare school counselors who can effectively utilize violence prevention and intervention strategies and collaborate in the development and implementation of comprehensive and broad-based prevention programs.

Need for a systems approach. Just as school counselors and other educators do not bear sole responsibility for violence prevention efforts in the school and community, school counselors and other school pupil personnel workers cannot be expected to address the personal, social, and emotional needs of students by themselves. A multisystemic approach in which schools, community agencies, and other institutions use each other as resources within a carefully planned framework can provide a much more effective model for service delivery (Keys & Lockhart, 1999).

Diversity issues. Despite extensive support for the importance of considering multicultural issues in counseling and the American Counseling Association's (ACA) promotion of Multicultural Counseling Standards (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992), diversity issues training remains a challenging area. Definitions of diversity often are restricted to discussions of race/ethnicity, rather than extended to include equally important factors such as gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, religion, age, class, etc. Further, training often focuses solely on comparison of cultural groups and thus inadvertently serves to reinforce differences and dichotomies (e.g., African Americans compared to Caucasians, men versus women, gay men and lesbians as opposed to heterosexuals, disabled versus presently able-bodied individuals). Unfortunately, students who primarily learn about between-group differences but are not given adequate opportunities to explore concepts related to within-group differences have essentially been trained to stereotype. Moreover, if counselors-in-training are not provided with ongoing opportunities to explore their own attitudes, beliefs, and biases, in relation to all areas of diversity, their multicultural training remains superficial, at best. These deficits are not limited to school counselor education programs; indeed, they may exist in community counseling, career

counseling, college counseling and student affairs, or any of the other counselor education program specializations.

State Level

Every state has its own education department or other regulating body for school counselor education. Depending on the structure in place, all school counselor education programs must demonstrate how they meet state standards and/or state mandates to address various issues. In California, for example, the standards set by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC) provide the basis for determining whether programs designed to prepare teachers, counselors, administrators, and other educators are approved by the state to recommend candidates for the various credentials that are required of individuals who work in public school settings. These standards are revised periodically. The most recent standards for Pupil Personnel Services (PPS) programs (CCTC, 1994, 2001), which include school counseling, school psychology, school social work, and child welfare and attendance, were distributed in January 2001.

Local Level

On a local level, the philosophies and priorities of universities and colleges, school districts, and formal partnerships among these entities will influence the types of school counselor education reform that is initiated in a school counselor preparation program. The university, college/school, and department housing the program each impacts the development of the program in basic, specific ways, from regulating resources to determining and implementing procedures for curriculum revision and approval. In a more complex way, school district needs and partnership priorities also affect school counselor education reform.

Needs of local school districts. The school counselor preparation program impacts the school districts that work most closely with the program while also being responsive to the district's needs. For example, in order to help address the teacher and counselor shortages in California, a School Counseling Internship Credential is available to qualified students in the school counselor education program who have completed a series of required courses and received a formal offer of employment from a participating school district. They may then work as a school counselor for full pay while completing the rest of their program requirements and receiving appropriate supervision. Our school counselor education program at California State University, Long Beach, a large, urban university servicing many school districts in southern California, has an approved School Counseling Internship Credential program designed to meet the need for more counselors in the many schools it serves. In the Long Beach Unified School District alone, roughly150 counselors serve a student enrollment of approximately 93,000, resulting in a student:counselor ratio of 620:1, a much higher ratio than ASCA recommends, yet favorable in comparison to the overall state ratio.

Community partnerships. Partnerships may exist between school districts and agencies, or between school districts and universities/colleges. The city of Long Beach has received national recognition for its Long Beach Education Partnership, comprised of representatives from California State University, Long Beach (CSULB); Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD); and Long Beach City College (LBCC), working together to promote a seamless educational system for K-18 students. The Counseling Reform Launch Initiative (CRLI) is a subgroup of the Partnership with four goals: (a) to advance knowledge and application of the American School Counseling Association's 1997 National Standards for School Counseling

Programs, (b) to clarify the role of the school counselor in relation to the standards, (c) to enhance the CSULB counselor education program, and (d) to facilitate school violence prevention. As the School Counseling Programs Coordinator, I co-chair this initiative with the former Violence Prevention Coordinator for LBUSD, who currently is a CSULB school counselor education faculty member and consultant to LBUSD. The Counseling Reform Launch Initiative has been invaluable in its input into recent CSULB counselor education program changes.

Student Needs and Wants

During 1997-1998, my first year at CSULB, one of my primary goals as the School Counseling Programs Coordinator was to learn what our graduating students and recent graduates felt that they needed more information about as part of their pre-service education. With the support of the CRLI, I conducted a needs assessment of these students. The areas that students most frequently identified were legal and ethical issues, information related to special education, and gangs. I also used the current (1994) CCTC PPS School Counseling Program Standards as a resource to assess how effectively we were meeting state requirements. I identified learning theory/learning styles as an additional area that we needed to address, even though this was not perceived as a need by students. Finally, with members of the CRLI, I explored the question "What do we want our entry-level school counselors to look like?" In other words, what knowledge, skills, and attitudes should they have?

I drew from my ten years experience as a school counselor in New York, my familiarity with the professional school counseling literature, and the wisdom of CRLI members in identifying key elements in the answers to these questions. I found that it was essential and

invaluable to listen to the ideas of the practicing school counselors in the area and to integrate those ideas into our developing curriculum. Despite the many differences between California and New York, and North Carolina, where I spent my post school counselor years in pursuit of my doctorate, some issues related to school counseling were very much the same. Moreover, ASCA's National Standards had just been developed and were just beginning to receive acclaim. The most frequently identified items that school counselors needed to know were: (a) how to be advocates for students, (b) how to be advocates for the profession, (c) how to be leaders, (d) how to be more intentional in application of theory to practice, and (e) how to work effectively with diverse student populations. During Summer 1998 and Fall 1998, I developed and proposed several major school counselor education program curriculum changes. All were approved in 1998-1999 and implemented in 1999-2000.

CSULB's School Counselor Education Program

As noted earlier, the concept of "theory to practice" provides an important focus for our training of school counselors. Counselors need to be able to understand and articulate sound rationales for the strategies that they implement. To be fully developed, their rationales should include not only counseling theory, human development theory, and career development theory, as applicable, but also identity development theory around issues such as race/ethnicity (Helms, 1990, 1995; Phinney, 1992, 1993), gender (Conarton & Kreger-Silverman, 1988; Downing & Roush, 1985) and sexual orientation (Cass, 1979), as relevant. Theory-to-practice is introduced as a framework during students' first semester in the program and continues as a major theme throughout their pre-service training.

Entrance and Exit Courses

One of the most salient features of our program is the prominence of specific entrance and exit courses for school counseling students only. In addition to addressing key concepts related to school counseling and students' personal and professional development, these courses provide a forum for the establishment of an identity as a cohort and the experience of closure for their graduate program, respectively.

Entrance course. Students are admitted to the CSULB school counselor education program for Fall only. During their first Fall semester, they must take the program's entrance course: Counseling in School Settings. This is a course that I developed during Summer and Fall of 1998 for curriculum approval in 1998-1999. In preparation for teaching it for the first time in Fall 1999, I continued to develop it during Summer 1999. Based upon student feedback and my own assessment, I modified it further for Fall 2000, and will continue to do so over time.

Course objectives are:

1. Students will develop an understanding of the role of the professional school counselor in contemporary school settings.
2. Students will develop an understanding of the role of the professional school counselor as a leader in the educational system and a social change agent.
3. Students will develop an awareness of some of the issues and problems faced by today's youth and how these concerns are addressed by the professional school counselor.
4. Students will develop an understanding of key issues as they relate to counseling in school settings, including professional, legal, and ethical issues, and issues of

diversity, including race/ethnicity, gender, disabilities, sexual orientation, and others.

5. Students will develop basic listening, facilitative, and communication skills, and an understanding of a professional helping relationship.
6. Students will explore their own attitudes and beliefs about people and about self in relation to the counseling process.
7. Students will assess their comfort and fit with working as a professional counselor in the school setting.

Students are introduced to ASCA's National Standards for School Counseling Programs (Campbell & Dahir, 1997) early in the semester. Guest speakers are invited to address issues such as special education, violence prevention and intervention, and school-to-work initiatives.

In keeping with the theory to practice theme, this course requires field experiences in which the students are asked to observe how counselors in the schools apply principles from current school counseling literature to their work. Each student is paired up with one or more professional school counselors, who serve as mentors to them during the semester. Many of these mentors are members of the Counseling Reform Launch Initiative; some are recent graduates of the CSULB school counselor preparation program. Each student maintains a journal describing her or his experiences.

An assignment that is aligned with Objective #4 that has worked well involves student presentations on critical issues such as suicide, child abuse, alcohol and other drugs, racism in the schools, sexism in the schools, teen pregnancy, gangs, sexual orientation, changes in family structure through divorce/separation, death/loss, disabilities, etc. In making the presentation,

students may either assume the role of the school counselor, which requires that their classmates assume the roles of elementary, middle, or high school students, as appropriate, or they may speak as school counselors-in-training to their peers. This assignment has facilitated students' understanding of these issues via both discussion of related professional literature and the actual life experiences of their peers. (Both the entrance and exit course syllabi are available from the author upon request.)

Exit course. The school counseling program exit course (Seminar in Professional Development in School Counseling) is designed to support the integration and synthesis of knowledge, skills, and attitudes learned and developed during the school counseling program, and to facilitate the transition from graduate student to school counseling professional and lifelong learner. Although the course is not designed specifically to prepare graduating master's students for their comprehensive examination, it does so indirectly through its emphasis on synthesis and integration of program areas.

Course objectives are:

1. Students will update and expand their understanding of the school counseling profession, including counselor roles, issues of diversity, and professional, ethical, and legal issues.
2. Students will develop their ability to critically assess aspects of the school counseling profession, including theories, interventions, research and evaluation (including action research), assessment tools, trends, and the application of theory to practice.
3. Students will develop their presentation, facilitation, and communication skills,

including competence in electronic communication.

4. Students will further develop their personal philosophy of counseling and methods of practice, as it relates to the profession in general as well as to their specialized area.

5. Students will continue to explore their own attitudes and beliefs about people and about self in relation to the counseling process.

6. Students will assess their current status and design a five-year professional growth and career plan.

One of the course requirements is to facilitate a discussion on a diversity issue from among those identified on the syllabus for that semester. As the course instructor, I provide required readings related to each topic. The student's role as facilitator is to generate questions that emerge from the required readings for that topic and to explore relevant issues with the class. Because some of the students in this course already are practicing counselors who have earned the California School Counseling Internship Credential, they also have the option to serve as mentors to students in the entrance course. Students not selecting this option may select from other possible assignments. The mentor option is available during Fall semesters only, as the entrance course is offered only in the Fall.

Throughout the semester, students in the exit course are required to participate in a class listserv by initiating and engaging in on-line discussion related to the class readings. Comments, questions, insights, or reactions related to the previous class also are invited. The listserv has served as a useful tool to encourage greater participation among the more introverted students, and has provided a means for all students for reflection and processing of sensitive issues.

Other course assignments are designed to facilitate each student's development of a well-integrated and articulated theoretical approach to working with students in the school setting. They examine their past and current work with students, and are challenged to identify and examine assessment issues, ethical dilemmas, and research questions that relate to their work. All of these areas are considered in relation to diversity. Furthermore, students are challenged to explore theories of identity development in relation to their own growth process.

Application of this Model to Other Settings

This model is not presented as an ideal; on the contrary, it is offered as a "program-in-process." The program components described here will have varying degrees of usefulness or appeal to other school counselor educators. Again, certain factors first must be considered in regard to the feasibility of implementing some of these components in other settings. Accordingly, some of the influences on school counselor education reform were described earlier in this article. Other related concerns are discussed below, including suggestions for initiating desired program modifications.

One such consideration is the size of the program. Both the entrance and exit courses described here have a maximum size of 15 students (although in some semesters there may be two sections of the entrance course, scheduled at the same time so that both sections can be combined for guest speakers and other relevant purposes). Class size is limited so that students get individual attention and also have a safe environment in which to discuss sensitive but critical issues seen as vital to their personal and professional growth as school counselors-in-training. Maintaining small class sizes has budgetary implications and, in our case, also necessitates denying admission to many well-qualified applicants each year. Decisions related to program

size inevitably are based on a number of factors that differ across programs and institutions. In many cases, grant funding can be utilized to supplement existing resources so that programs might experiment with modifications to their current models.

Relatedly, the number of qualified faculty available to teach school counselor education courses varies from program to program, as well as within one program from one semester to the next. Many programs, including ours, are fortunate to have excellent part-time faculty who are either professional school counselors or retired from the school counseling profession but still current and active in the field. Each instructor has unique strengths and areas of expertise, which may include expertise in one or more specific theories. Programs are encouraged to look to their local school districts for competent part-time school counselor educators and to provide opportunities for collaboration with other part-time and full-time faculty interested in program development. To further facilitate the theory-to-practice emphasis and help keep faculty current, ongoing faculty development opportunities such as workshops, seminars, or brown-bag lunch discussions may be scheduled that focus on various theories as well as relevant professional issues.

Making diversity issues a priority in school counselor education programs can be challenging and even threatening to many individuals, including educators at all levels; yet, the extent of racism, sexism, homophobia, and other social problems in contemporary schools necessitates some action on our part. Success in this area requires that faculty engaged in the process are willing to confront their own biases. Counselor education faculty are encouraged to seek both internal and external sources of support to assist in this process. To facilitate shared ownership of the responsibility to deal with diversity issues, involving the students in developing

a focus on diversity in one's school counselor education program also is suggested.

Finally, our program's success is linked to our partnership with other educational institutions in the area. Other school counselor education programs' efforts to initiate curricular reform may be enhanced by cultivating similar relationships and initiatives.

Conclusion

The development of effective school counselor education programs necessitates addressing evolving national, state, and local influences. Concurrently, the relationship between theory and practice provides a constant focus for assessing whether school counselors know not only what to do but also why they do it. Counseling theories, human development theories, career development theories, and identity development theories that focus on areas of diversity are all recognized as key elements that contribute to the counselor's basis for selecting both proactive and remedial strategies in the school setting.

Ongoing application of theory to practice in school counselor education programs requires consistent efforts to integrate the knowledge, attitudes, and skills that professional school counselors need to be effective in a changing society. Entrance and exit courses specific to the needs of school counselors-in-training provide one mechanism for the delivery of this important curriculum content.

References

California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. (1994, 2001). Standards of quality and effectiveness for pupil personnel services credentials. Sacramento, CA: Author.

Campbell, C. A., & Dahir, C. A. (1997). Sharing the vision: The national standards for school counseling programs. Alexandria, VA: American School Counselor Association.

Cass, V. C. (1979). Homosexual identity formation: A theoretical model. Journal of Homosexuality, 4, 219-235.

Conarton, S., & Kreger-Silverman, L. (1988). Feminist development through the life cycle. In M. A. Dutton-Douglas & L. E. Walker (Eds.), Feminist psychotherapies: Integration of therapeutic and feminist systems (pp. 37-67). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Downing, N. E., & Roush, K. L. (1985). From passive-acceptance to active commitment: A model of feminist identity development for women. The Counseling Psychologist, 13, 695-709.

Education Trust. (1996). National initiative to transform school counseling. [Brochure]. Washington, DC: Author.

Helms, J. E. (1990). Black and White racial identity: Theory and research. Westport, CT: Greenwood.

Helms, J. E. (1995). An update on Helms's White and People of Color racial identity models. In J. Ponterotto, J. M. Casas, L. A. Suzuki, & C. M. Alexander (Eds.), Handbook of multicultural counseling (pp. 181-198). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Keys, S. G., & Lockhart, E. J. (1999). The school counselor's role in facilitating multisystemic change. Professional School Counseling, 3, 101-107.

Phinney, J. S. (1992). The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure: A new scale for use with adolescents and young adults from diverse groups. Journal of Adolescent Research, 7, 156-176.

Phinney, J. S. (1993). A three-stage model of ethnic identity development. In M. B. Knight & G. Knight (Eds.), Ethnic identity: Formation and transmission among Hispanics and other minorities (pp. 61-79). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Sandhu, D. S. (2000). Special issue: School violence and counselors [introduction]. Professional School Counseling, 4, iv-v.

Sue, D. W., Arredondo, P., & McDavis, R. J. (1992). Multicultural competencies/standards: A pressing need. Journal of Counseling and Development, 70, 485-486.